

## SUCCESS STORY

### Increase Use and Reuse of Learning and Development Resources



Cheryl Eckhardt

GOAL Academy Training Manager  
Leadership Development Group

Cheryl Eckhardt is the Training Manager for the NPS GOAL Academy, a 9-month leadership development program for mid-level NPS employees. Designed to promote the concept of "leadership now," participants build their proficiency in 18 leadership competency soft skills such as resilience, team building, creativity, and vision. Candidates apply to be accepted into this highly competitive program that fosters a blended learning environment of residential sessions, webinars, assignments, an online course, a class project, 360 evaluations, and a mentorship.

## Challenge

Each year, 50 NPS employees participate in the GOAL (Generating Organizational Advancement and Leadership) Academy. As GOAL Training Manager, Cheryl Eckhardt oversees a blended learning environment with a multitude of moving parts; the quantity of information and dialogue that needs to happen between Cheryl and participants throughout the program is substantial. A platform was needed to allow for on-the-spot information exchange and to facilitate communication flow.

## Solution

Cheryl embraced the Common Learning Portal for a solution, creating a private group on the CLP Commons dedicated to each year's 50 GOAL Academy participants. This group functions as the central clearinghouse and dedicated space for all things GOAL -- "one stop shopping" for participants where Cheryl posts everything GOALIES need throughout the run of the program (assignments, agendas, etc.).

This private group also serves as "home base" for communicating with each other and Cheryl. Unlike clunky and numerous email chains, the private group allows for easy back-and-forth communication among group members where they can respond to assignments, answer questions, share information, provide feedback, upload files, and ultimately connect with each other. Plus, the privacy of the group facilitates an environment of trust where participants can be comfortable opening up.

The participants receive assignments each month (posted in the private group) that include tutorials which live in the CLP Knowledge Park. For example, participants may be asked to watch a video or read an article in the Knowledge Park and then discuss with each other in their private group. The CLP provides a seamless transition between the learning item itself in the Knowledge Park and the space in the Commons where they can engage with Cheryl and their fellow GOALIES on the topic of the day. This learning environment allows them to dig deeper and get multiple perspectives, creating a much more meaningful learning experience.

As a bonus, all GOAL Academy Knowledge Park resources in the CLP are readily accessible by any NPS employee. With a quick search for "GOAL Academy" in the Knowledge Park, anyone can find and tap into GOAL's rich library of learning materials. Prospective GOAL candidates take note! And having such accessible content allows GOALIES to "pay it forward" by sharing resources with their colleagues back at their park or program.

## Outcome

With 50 participants scattered across the nation in different time zones, having everything in one place is a huge time saver for the participants and Cheryl. Miscommunication is greatly reduced because there are no lost email messages, long email chains, forgotten replies, or duplicate questions. Participants can access all program materials whenever it is convenient for them. The closed Commons group creates a safe space for program participants to reflect on the sensitive topics covered in the leadership program. The seamless transition between tutorials on the Knowledge Park and discussing them in the group provides a rich and easy-to-use learning environment.

“The CLP is a great starting place to network with others with your same interests across NPS. You have access to it anytime, without having to travel.”

